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SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)
4th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 8 October 1997
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. MAPURANGA	(Zimbabwe)
later:	Mr. MOUNKHOU (Vice-Chairman)	(Mongolia)

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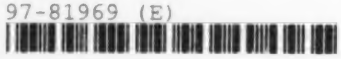

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (continued) (A/52/23 (Parts II, V, VI), A/AC.109/2071-2072, 2274-2078, 2080-2082, 2084, 2086-2088 and 2090)

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AGENDA ITEM 93: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/52/388)

1. Mr. LARRAIN (Chile) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Uruguay at the preceding meeting and believed that decolonization was an area in which the United Nations had achieved great success by helping a large number of the present Members of the Organization to acquire independence. That success also underlined the anachronistic nature of colonialism, and decolonization must therefore remain one of the immediate tasks of the United Nations as it entered a new phase. In that connection the Special Committee must continue to perform the basic functions contained in its mandate. Chile believed that the decision to transfer the decolonization unit from the Department of Political Affairs to the recently created Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services was counter-productive since such a transfer would seriously diminish the political significance of the unit's work and indeed would gradually weaken the role of the Special Committee.

2. The obligations of the international community towards the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which were endeavouring to achieve the full exercise of the right to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, and the relevant resolutions of the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee remained in force. The participation and cooperation of the administering Powers was of great importance. In that connection a welcome should be given to the contribution made to the ongoing work by New Zealand, as well as by other administering Powers such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom

of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with which a new dialogue had been established thanks to the spirit of cooperation in the Special Committee; Chile's persistent efforts had played a not insignificant role in the establishment of that dialogue.

3. Chile welcomed the understanding recently achieved with the European Union on questions connected with the activities of foreign economic interests, to which it attached great importance. In that matter Chile was guided solely by a desire to help to furnish the Non-Self-Governing Territories with the necessary resources to establish a durable economic foundation for the preservation and protection of their environment and culture, with a view to creating the conditions for exercise of the right to self-determination. It was extremely important for the United Nations and the Special Committee to continue the search for ways to reach an understanding with the administering Powers.

4. As far as the Latin American region was concerned, Chile was convinced that the peaceful settlement of the question of the Malvinas Islands by negotiation was the only means of solving that problem. The Chilean delegation expressed the hope for a speedy solution of the dispute between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

5. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the annual debate on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples provided an opportunity to assess in a comprehensive and fair manner what the United Nations had accomplished with respect to decolonization and the right of peoples to self-determination. What had been achieved was insufficient and would remain insufficient as long as there were nations in the world living under foreign occupation and deprived of their inalienable right to choose their own destiny.

6. At a time when the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, proclaimed in 1991, was coming to an end, the United Nations was called upon to make a decisive effort to complete the decolonization process started almost 40 years earlier and to implement fully the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in Territories under colonial domination. The General Assembly and the Committee, which had been so instrumental in defeating colonialism, should therefore remain the privileged forum and the tribune where the people still living under colonial domination could put their case and obtain political and moral support in their struggle for their right to decide for themselves.

7. At a time when the United Nations was engaged in a comprehensive and bold reform process which would, it was hoped, revitalize it, the field of action in which the Organization had accomplished the most glorious achievements - the field of decolonization - must be preserved. The structures entrusted with decolonization issues should therefore continue to enjoy full support until the right of self-determination had been granted to all nations.

8. In Western Sahara, where a proud and brave people had been claiming for more than 20 years its right to self-determination, a new dynamic had recently

been put in motion after years of deadlock. The appointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. James A. Baker III as his Personal Envoy had greatly contributed to the initiation of the process. The progress achieved by the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO during five rounds of direct talks had enabled global agreement to be reached on the pending issues that had prevented the settlement plan from being implemented. In principle, all the conditions for the implementation of the plan were in place and the two parties had firmly and officially expressed their willingness to comply with their commitment with regard to the identification process, the repatriation of refugees, the release of prisoners of war, the confinement of their respective troops and the code of conduct for the referendum campaign. The two parties had also confirmed their commitment to cooperate with the United Nations, which was required by the settlement plan to organize and conduct a referendum that was free from all constraints both for participants and for accredited observers. It had also been agreed by the two parties that during the transitional period the United Nations would ensure that all conditions existed for the organization of a referendum. It was up to the United Nations to put back on track the settlement plan which had been derailed for several years and to make sure that the two parties would comply sincerely and fully with their commitments. At the same time, the General Assembly should remain vigilant and continue to play a pivotal role by backing the implementation of the settlement plan and giving political and moral support to the Security Council and the Secretary-General in their efforts to hold the long-awaited referendum for self-determination as soon as possible.

9. Algeria, in its capacity as neighbouring country and official observer, would continue to give the Secretary-General and his Special Representative strong support in their efforts to implement the settlement plan and the agreements reached in Houston. The peace process in Western Sahara had reached a decisive point. The Committee and the General Assembly should therefore take note of the developments that had taken place and reaffirm the responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara and their support for the efforts of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the settlement plan. They should also urge the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to continue at the same level of cooperation and to comply with their commitments. The people of the Maghreb hoped that the two parties would sincerely implement the agreements reached in Houston and that peace and concord would prevail in the region.

10. Mr. WILMOT (Ghana) said he found it astonishing that the main proponents of the trend to make human rights and democracy critical determinants of the quality of relations between nations failed to apply their own high standards to their relations with Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration. Although most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were small islands, the international community had over the years maintained its principled position that the size of a territory, its population and paucity of resources should not deprive its people of their inalienable right to self-determination.

11. His country stood firmly behind the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and appreciated its work in promoting the

interests of peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. He hoped that the United Nations would not yield to the untenable wishes of the administering Powers and that the necessary resources would continue to be made available to the Special Committee until its mandate was fully executed. He also affirmed his delegation's agreement with the position of the Special Committee, which in its resolution entitled "Decolonization programme in the United Nations system" of 6 June 1997 (A/AC.109/2094) reaffirmed the political nature of its mandate and urged that the Decolonization Branch of the Secretariat should be strengthened and retained in the Department of Political Affairs. That position, reiterated in the letter of the Chairman of the Special Committee (A/52/379), had been clearly explained to the Committee by the Chairman of the Special Committee on 6 October 1997.

12. His delegation noted with regret that some administering Powers were continuing to deny the Organization the cooperation required of them by the Charter and General Assembly resolutions in order to ensure progress towards decolonization. It called on those States to follow the example of New Zealand, which through constructive cooperation with the people of Tokelau and the United Nations had contributed to the socio-economic development of Tokelau and the evolution of its people towards the exercise of their right to self-determination.

13. His delegation noted the informal dialogue between the Special Committee and some administering Powers and called for that dialogue to be formalized and directed towards the consideration of any new proposals that would lead to the exercise by the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories of their right to self-determination. That dialogue should promote action on the ground for the socio-economic development of the peoples concerned and the education of the peoples with regard to the options available to them for self-determination. In addition, invitations to the United Nations to send visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories would be a welcome product of the informal dialogue. His delegation noted with appreciation the appointment of a Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor and called on all the parties concerned to cooperate with the Secretary-General in the exercise of his good offices to find a just solution to the problem.

14. As to the question of Western Sahara, the last Non-Self-Governing Territory on the African continent, the head of his delegation, in his statement to the General Assembly on 24 September 1997, had reiterated Ghana's belief that direct dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations would be the best means of reviving the peace process to enable the Saharan people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. His delegation had been gratified to learn from the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara (A/52/364) that the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker III, had succeeded in bringing the parties together and brokering a compromise agreement, which had been an important step forward in seeking a just settlement of the Saharan question.

15. Mr. PÉREZ-OTERMIN (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR), and also Bolivia and Chile, stressed the importance and urgency of the decolonization process, in which the United Nations had achieved tangible success. At a time of rapid and far-

reaching changes in the international order, the United Nations had an opportunity to achieve progress in resolving the problems on the agenda of the Special Committee. The fact that a few years before the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories gave rise to serious concern and strengthened adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee.

16. At the third meeting of the States members of MERCOSUR, held in Montevideo on 29 August 1997, the States members had stressed the importance of the work of the Special Committee in the interests of the decolonization process and expressed their disagreement with the transfer of the decolonization unit from the Department of Political Affairs to the recently established Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, since they believed that the move seriously undermined the Special Committee's political mandate.

17. As to the question of the Malvinas, he once again affirmed the statement made by the Presidents of the States members of MERCOSUR and Bolivia and Chile in June 1996 in which they confirmed their support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the dispute concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas islands. They had also expressed their interest in a rapid settlement of the protracted dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom concerning sovereignty over those Territories in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

18. Mr. SAGUIER CABALLERO (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that several years before the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean. The United Nations had achieved great success in that field since, from the time of its establishment, millions of people had gained the opportunity to exercise their right of self-determination and independence through its promotion of the decolonization process. Over a period of 50 years more than 80 States had gained independence and become Members of the United Nations. In that connection, an important contribution was being made to the decolonization process by the Special Committee.

19. The question of decolonization covered a large number of issues, and the United Nations, the administering Powers, States Members, and Governments of Territories were participating in resolving those issues. In that connection the Rio Group wished to express its concern about the transfer of the functions of the decolonization unit from the Department of Political Affairs to the recently established Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. The Rio Group believed that that step would be detrimental to the mandate of the Special Committee and would undermine the decolonization programme of the United Nations. At the same time, it should be noted that the administering Powers had an essential role to play in the decolonization process, since they had the main responsibility for preparing the inhabitants for the exercise of their right of self-determination and the establishment of the political, social, economic and other conditions necessary to enable those Territories to look to the future with confidence.

20. It should be recalled that there was a need to submit to the Secretary-General information on the Non-Self-Governing Territories, since such information made it possible to assess the development of the situation in those Territories in various spheres. In addition, the importance should be emphasized of organizing visiting missions and regional seminars, which made it possible to hear not only representatives of the administering Powers, interested States and international organizations, but also the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories themselves. On the other hand, it should be noted that those Territories were faced with enormous problems that confronted the whole of mankind, such as illegal narcotics trafficking and other forms of crime which called for concrete international cooperation in the effort to eradicate them. In addition, the need for strict observance of the right of those peoples to free utilization of their wealth and natural resources and the requirement that the Non-Self-Governing Territories and regions adjacent to them should not be used for deployment and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other forms of weapons of mass destruction should not be ignored.

21. The Rio Group welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his personal envoy to reach agreements that would enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. It noted with satisfaction the news that extremely positive results had recently been achieved that would make it possible to overcome the main obstacles to the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum on self-determination. The Group expressed the hope that the two sides would cooperate fully so that the recently concluded agreements could be transformed into concrete action which would make a final solution of the issue of decolonization possible in the near future.

22. Where the Latin America region was concerned, he again expressed the hope that bilateral relations between Argentina and the United Kingdom would make it possible to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement of the issue of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization.

23. Mr. SANTAPUTRA (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that on the threshold of the next century, the task of decolonization had yet to be completed, for a few Non-Self-Governing Territories still remained. ASEAN supported the right to self-determination and the decolonization process, as well as the provisions of the General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. ASEAN considered that it was most crucial to ensure conditions so that the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories and their peoples could freely exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the General Assembly.

24. ASEAN considered that self-sufficiency vis-à-vis economic and social development was a major factor in the success of the decolonization process, and therefore concurred with the 1996 report of the Special Committee, which reaffirmed the responsibility of the administering Powers to promote economic and social development, giving priority to the strengthening and diversification of their economies. The world community should provide assistance to the newly

sovereign States in their journey towards self-sufficiency. In that regard, ASEAN supported the move to invite the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue to take all necessary measures to accelerate progress in the social and economic life, in particular, of small island Non-Self-Governing Territories.

25. On the issue of Western Sahara, ASEAN welcomed the recent agreement between the parties on issues that for two years had held up the implementation of the settlement plan. ASEAN hoped that the agreements contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/1997/742) would be implemented as soon as possible.

26. At the recent intensive negotiations between the Special Committee on decolonization and the administering Powers, political will had been exhibited and a spirit of compromise had prevailed, thus allowing the negotiating phase to move onto the next stage. ASEAN earnestly hoped that the administering Powers would keep their part of the bargain which had facilitated the consensus decision.

27. Mr. GUARINI (United States of America) said that the adoption by consensus, on 27 March 1997, of General Assembly resolution 51/224 A and B had been a significant achievement in itself. It had also represented a key step to the next stage of the informal dialogue between the United States and the Special Committee. The text of the resolution was appropriately balanced, contained no cold war rhetoric, and acknowledged progress towards self-government in the Territories concerned. It also recognized that self-determination could not be reduced solely to the concept of full independence, but also included a much broader range of acceptable options, as long as they were the result of free and informed choice by the people affected.

28. At the same time, fundamental differences still remained between the United States and the Special Committee on the issue of the eradication of colonialism and how it related to the Non-Self-Governing Territories under United States administration. However, the United States was ready to continue work, and believed that the spirit of cooperation, flexibility and good-will would help continue to build trust and lead to closer cooperation.

29. The United States, in moving into the next phase of dialogue with the Special Committee, believed that the informal dialogue should continue with a view to the possible renewal of formal cooperation; it was prepared to review with the Special Committee the efficacy of and the need for the latter's regional seminars, and hoped to consider appropriate mechanisms by which to give recognition to expressions of self-determination by the peoples of the Territories concerned, with a view to removing those Territories from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

30. With regard to the draft resolutions under agenda item 91, the United States was of the view that economic activity in Non-Self-Governing Territories was, in itself, not harmful. Indeed, economic investment often directly benefited the inhabitants of a given region. Furthermore, every State had a right and obligation to defend its citizens, inter alia on the basis of

collective security arrangements. Moreover, Territories that hosted security forces benefited economically from such relationships.

31. Circumstances unique to the situation of each particular Non-Self-Governing Territory should be considered. There were various legitimate forms of self-government short of full independence which benefit the people of both the administering Power and the Non-Self-Governing Territory.

32. Mr. NÚÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that the attainment of independence by a large number of States and their entry into the United Nations as Members thanks to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) was one of the Organization's achievements of which it could be proud. At the same time, it was extremely important not to slacken the efforts aimed at attaining the objective set by the General Assembly of ensuring that by the year 2000 the world was completely free of colonialism. The list of Non-Self-Governing Territories with which the United Nations was dealing was still unacceptably long. Apart from that, there were also other Territories which year after year attracted the close attention of the Special Committee, in particular Puerto Rico, the colonial status of which was an affront to Latin America.

33. Given that situation, how was one to view the efforts of those who were seeking to destroy the entire mechanism established by the United Nations to promote the process of decolonization, and of those who wanted to review the provisions and principles that constituted the very foundation of the decolonization process? Their attempts should be firmly rejected. Precisely for that reason it was necessary, now as never before, for the General Assembly to declare once again its unconditional support for the work of the Special Committee.

34. One of the most important elements of the work of the Special Committee was associated with the holding of the regional seminars, the most recent of which had successfully taken place in 1997 in Antigua and Barbuda. Such seminars were an irreplaceable source of first-hand information for the Special Committee about what was happening in the Territories with which it dealt. Their importance was all the greater in that not all the administering Powers fulfilled their Charter obligation to provide such information. Yet another form of important activity was the sending of visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, something which, unfortunately, had not taken place for many years. The Cuban delegation hoped that visiting missions would soon be sent to some Territories. That applied in particular to Guam, the petitioners from which regularly made a request to that effect when that spoke in the Fourth Committee.

35. The informal consultations that had taken place between administering Powers and the Special Committee in 1997 had made it possible to simplify considerably the texts of the relevant draft resolutions. There were grounds for hoping that those drafts would be adopted by consensus. In addition, it was to be hoped that in future such consultations would cease to be informal and there would be full-scale and frank formal cooperation between administering Powers and the Special Committee, as called for by the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

36. With regard to the transfer of the unit dealing with decolonization to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, his delegation supported the efforts being made to retain the unit within the Department of Political Affairs.

37. The Special Committee had a great deal of work before it in the last years of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Accordingly, the General Assembly must assure it of its full support and give it the resources needed for its work. The Fourth Committee could do a great deal in that respect.

38. Mr. POWLES (New Zealand) said that it made little sense for the United Nations to set a decolonization timetable that ignored the realities confronting the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The situation in which Tokelau found itself was different from the pattern traditionally considered by the Special Committee. Had that not been the case, there would have been a temptation to use one of the known governmental models, and not to begin from basics. Tokelau had to find an alternative route to development, drawing upon its own tradition, developing its own ideas in its own language and setting its own timetable for self-determination. Currently, Tokelau had reached what looked to be a defining point in its constitutional journey. A first report, in Tokelauan, on the content of a future constitution had been made at the end of 1996. In September 1997 Tokelau's legal adviser had produced, with UNDP funding, a dual-language report and a collection of the laws of Tokelau, which would facilitate the proper use of the legislative power gained by the General Fono in 1996. Another important focus was the drive to recover traditional village authority, concentrating on capacity-building in the villages, which remained short of the human and organizational skills required.

39. In 1996, New Zealand had called for the United Nations to reevaluate its decolonization strategy, for a new compact between the peoples of the last remaining Territories, the administering Powers and the United Nations, and for a restructuring of the United Nations machinery to reflect the real needs of the Territories. New Zealand had seen welcome signs of that new compact in the constructive negotiations that had taken place earlier in 1996 between the Committee of 24 and other administering Powers. For the first time, consensus had been reached on the so-called "omnibus" small Territories resolution. New Zealand hoped that that new compact would provide the basis for even greater cooperation and consensus in 1997.

40. The 1997 General Assembly was being called the "reform Assembly". It was fitting, therefore, that the United Nations machinery for decolonization was coming under scrutiny. That machinery must meet primarily the needs of the Territories, which included: full implementation of the reporting requirements of the Charter; direct input from the people of the Territories, through petitioners if they so wished; multilateral review each year of all material presented; direct consideration of the situation in the Territories by the Special Committee; adoption by the General Assembly of appropriate decisions in cases where there were concrete avenues for United Nations action. In that connection, New Zealand noted with satisfaction that at a time of fiscal restraint the programme of activities in that important area was not being

reduced and staff members were being maintained to deal with the greater amount of reporting being provided by Member States.

41. At the same time, the decision to move the decolonization section from the Department of Political Affairs to the new formed Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services gave rise to concern. Such a reorganization sent all the wrong signals about the importance of decolonization on the world's agenda. It should be noted in that regard that General Assembly resolution 51/219 stated categorically that the Department of Political Affairs would continue to assist the Special Committee in the implementation of its mandate, as appropriate. That seemed to be a clear indication from the General Assembly about the political importance of the decolonization process.

42. Mr. Mounkhou (Mongolia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

43. Mr. AL-ANBUGE (Iraq) said that the Special Committee had achieved significant successes in 1997: it had succeeded in agreeing with the administering Powers on a draft resolution on small Territories, which had been adopted by the General Assembly without a vote in May 1997; it had also reached an agreement with the European Union on a draft resolution on the activities of foreign economic and other interests which impeded the implementation of the Declaration; it had successfully held in St. Johns a regional seminar for the countries of the Caribbean basin, in which representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories had taken part; and it continued to attach great importance in its work to the implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations with a view to the provision of assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

44. Iraq supported the Special Committee's position that it was essential to strengthen the decolonization unit, which provided secretariat services for the Fourth Committee. The Iraqi delegation called upon the Secretary-General to restore the unit to the Department of Political Affairs. It was wrong to take measures which impaired the Special Committee's programmes or impeded its performance of its duties. Instead, the General Assembly should acknowledge the successes achieved by the Special Committee and urge the administering Powers to cooperate with it in every way.

45. Mr. LIU Jieyi (China) said that the adoption in 1960 of the historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had greatly accelerated the decolonization process, bringing about fundamental changes in the membership of the United Nations and in the structure of relations between nations. An important contribution had been made by the Organization itself, and in particular the Special Committee on decolonization. However, it must be remembered that the decolonization process was not yet completed and that it was still necessary to make tremendous efforts to attain the goal of decolonization set by the United Nations for the year 2000.

46. The Chinese Government and people attached great importance to the decolonization process and supported it in every way. The peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had an inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly; exercise of that right required the joint efforts of the parties

concerned, including the United Nations, the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the administering Powers. It was to be hoped that the administering Powers would cooperate better with the Organization and the peoples of the Territories, in order to create the necessary conditions for the exercise of the right to self-determination. The dissemination of information on decolonization, the holding of regional seminars with the participation of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the sending of United Nations visiting missions to the Territories were effective means of attaining that goal. In that connection the administering Powers should transmit the relevant information and reports to the United Nations without delay, support regional seminars and receive visiting missions.

47. Another important element of the decolonization process was the provision of assistance to establish a sound economic basis, and the administering Powers were duty-bound to promote economic and social development in the Territories and facilitate their economic diversification. Foreign economic and other interests operating in the Territories should take into account and respect the interests and wishes of the local people and protect their natural and human resources. At the same time the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system should continue to take the necessary measures to ensure the social and economic progress of the Territories.

48. The Chinese delegation had always attached great importance to the cause of decolonization and believed that no reform of the United Nations should diminish the attention given to that question. China had taken note of the Secretary-General's statement on his decision to transfer the decolonization unit from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. It hoped that the Secretariat would not downgrade the level of services provided to the Special Committee but would rather accord more constant attention to the question of decolonization, as well as strengthening its support for activities in that area.

49. Ms. WILLIAMS (Jamaica) said that her delegation supported the statement made by Grenada on behalf of the CARICOM countries concerning the situation in Montserrat and welcomed the highly successful talks held with Montserrat's representatives and sections of its populace, which had marked the beginning of a new partnership with that country. A decision by the General Assembly to provide immediate emergency assistance to Montserrat to help cope with the aftermath of the volcanic eruption would be in keeping with the spirit of the appeal recently made to the General Assembly by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, when he called for an appropriate demonstration of support for Montserrat by means of tangible measures to assist in the rebuilding and sustainable development of the island.

50. Jamaica noted with concern that the budget for the biennium 1997-1998 contained no resources for carrying out the activities called for in the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, except for the convening of the regional seminars. That would seem to suggest that the plan of action for the Decade had become irrelevant. But Jamaica believed that, pending a legitimate act of self-determination, there was no basis for the removal of any of the Territories currently on the list. Linked to that question was the misperception that holding general elections in a Territory somehow meant the

expression of a preference for a particular political status. Jamaica agreed on the need to prepare a revised plan of self-determination which would reflect the views of the people of the Territories on the best approaches to self-determination.

51. With regard to the reform of the United Nations, the Jamaican delegation sought clarification of the rationale of relocating the Special Committee's secretariat from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. The immediate effect of that change seemed to be that the new division would cover the work of all six Main Committees of the General Assembly and that the Special Committee would no longer have its own staff resources to deal exclusively with decolonization issues.

52. Jamaica was gratified to learn of the positive outcome of the difficult and protracted negotiations on the resolution on small Territories which had resulted in its adoption by consensus. Jamaica was also heartened by the understanding reached with the European Union on the resolution on foreign economic interests and urged the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly to adopt the resolution by consensus before the end of the year. It was also pleased to note that the parties to the dispute on the question of Western Sahara had reached agreement on what for so many years had seemed to be an intractable problem.

53. Ms. SMITH (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the statements made by the representatives of Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay, said that the position of the United Kingdom on the question of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands was well known. It had been stated quite recently by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom speaking in exercise of the right of reply during a plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 24 September 1997.

54. Mr. GUARINI (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the comments made by the representative of Cuba about the colonial status of Puerto Rico, said that the Committee should remember that the political status of Puerto Rico had been repeatedly confirmed by plebiscites, the latest of which had taken place in 1993. The results of the plebiscites showed clearly that there were few advocates of independence in Puerto Rico. The overwhelming majority of the population supported the status quo, and that meant that the issue had no connection with the Committee's work.

55. Mr. NÚÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, paid a tribute to the Puerto Rican patriots fighting for the independence of their country, which had been occupied by the United States almost 100 years ago. Fifteen of them were languishing in United States prisons. Their only offence was that they had fought for the independence of their country. Every year dozens of Puerto Rican petitioners spoke in the Special Committee on decolonization in defence of their just struggle. The representative of the United States had referred to plebiscites, but what value could a plebiscite have when it was conducted in an occupied Territory? He called upon the Government of the United States to dismantle its military bases in Puerto Rico,

withdraw its troops from the island and then hold a plebiscite, so that the people of Puerto Rico could express its opinion in genuine freedom.

56. Mr. SANOTO (Botswana) said that his delegation urged the States Members of the United Nations to support the Secretary-General's efforts to secure a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Western Sahara. The people of Western Sahara had a right to choose their future status in freedom, and to that end only the Saharan people should participate in the referendum. It was of utmost importance for the parties to observe strictly the agreement reached in Houston under the auspices of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy.

57. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea), speaking on behalf of the Chairman of the Special Committee and the 18 sponsors, introduced a draft resolution on agenda item 18 entitled "Decolonization programme in the United Nations system". The decolonization process in the world was still not completed. Moreover, some of the administrative changes envisaged as part of the reform of the United Nations threatened its decolonization work. The draft resolution made an urgent appeal to the Secretary-General to review the decision taken as part of the reform process to transfer the decolonization unit to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, for the unit still had a number of unresolved political questions to deal with. It was suggested that a decision should be taken on the draft resolution at the Committee's next meeting.

58. Mr. GUARINI (United States of America), speaking on a point of order, said that some members of the Committee had not received the text of the draft resolution and would not be able to take part in the decision on it until they had received adequate information.

59. Mr. RODRIGUEZ (Bolivia) said that his delegation wished to become a sponsor of the draft resolution introduced by the representative of Papua New Guinea.

60. Mr. DUMITRIU (Romania) said that delegations needed time to inform their Governments and receive instructions on the question. It was also necessary to hear the views of the Secretariat on the true programme and budget implications of the draft resolution.

61. Mr. PERFILIEV (Director of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division) said that the Secretariat did not have any information on the draft resolution since it had only just been introduced. He would inform the Under-Secretary-General about the Committee's interest in learning the Secretariat's position on the question and he hoped that the Under-Secretary-General would as usual respond attentively to such a request.

62. Mr. NÚÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba) said he took it that established procedure would be followed. When deciding to submit a draft for consideration by one of the Main Committees, Member States were not obliged to give the Secretariat prior notice of their intentions. His delegation considered that the Secretariat could publish the draft resolution expeditiously so that delegations could receive it that same day and could take a decision on it at the following meeting.

63. Mr. GUARINI (United States of America) said that it was a matter of informing not only the Secretary-General, but all States represented on the Committee; consideration of the draft should be postponed until delegations had received the appropriate instructions from their Governments.

64. Mr. DUMITRIU (Romania) said that, owing to time-zone differences, it would be difficult for many delegations to consult their Governments on the new issue in time to take a clear position by the next meeting, to be held the following day. He requested that understanding should be shown, and that consideration of the draft resolution should be postponed to a later date.

65. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic), emphasizing the importance of the issue before the Committee, said that the States which had presented the draft had exercised their sovereign right. He hoped that the Committee would distribute the text of the proposed draft appropriately so that it could be further studied and the necessary decision could be taken.

66. Mr. SATTAR (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Secretariat had not officially received the text of the draft resolution from Papua New Guinea. As soon as the text was received, the Secretariat would ensure that it was distributed, and the Committee itself would fix a date for considering and taking a decision on it.

67. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea) said that he intended to submit the draft officially that same afternoon.

68. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee needed additional time for consultations.

69. Mr. PERFILIEV (Director of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division) said that Under-Secretary-General Jin Yongjian was prepared to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

70. Mr. NÚÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba) said he hoped that the draft resolution would be issued expeditiously, so that all delegations would have it by the following day, enabling a decision to be made on it no more than one day later.

71. Mr. GUARINI (United States of America) said that it would be inappropriate to fix a precise date until the opinion of the Secretary-General had been considered and all delegations had been informed.

72. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic) said that there was no need to hold further consultations; the views set out in the draft were entirely clear. His delegation agreed with the representative of Cuba that a decision on the proposed draft could be taken the following day.

73. Mr. GAMITO (Portugal), while supporting the proposal that the Committee should be addressed by the Under-Secretary-General on the issue under consideration, pointed out that according to the rules of procedure a decision on a proposed resolution should be made within 24 hours.

74. Mr. GUARINI (United States of America) drew attention to the subjectivity of the opinion expressed by the sponsors of the resolution as to the clarity of its contents. It was for all delegations to decide whether it was clearly drafted and whether they all agreed with it.

75. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea) agreed that the draft resolution should be considered the following day.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

76. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to a series of communications containing requests for hearings on agenda item 18, concerning Western Sahara (A/C.4/52/4/Add.1-3), Guam (A/C.4/52/2/Add.6), and all Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/C.4/52/5), and suggested that the requests should be granted.

77. It was so decided.

78. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that another request for a hearing concerning Guam under agenda item 18 had been received, and suggested that, in accordance with established practice, it should be circulated as a document of the Committee and considered at the next meeting.

79. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.